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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: PEACE PROSPECTS WITH FARC REMAIN BLEAK

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) GOC Peace Commissioner Restrepo told us the FARC has not responded to GOC outreach efforts. He thinks the FARC may make a gesture to influence Colombia's 2010 presidential elections, as well as overtures to Venezuela and other Latin countries, but only if it first scores a military success. Catholic priest Dario Echeverri told us Restrepo's relations with President Uribe are strained, and that Restrepo has reportedly submitted his resignation. Restrepo and Echeverri are skeptical that the recent exchange of letters between a group of Colombian "intellectuals"--led by Senator Piedad Cordoba--and the FARC will lead anywhere. Restrepo said Cordoba is one of the FARC's cards in Colombian politics, and that the exchange is primarily designed to burnish her public image. End Summary.

PEACE PROSPECTS BLEAK

2. (C) GOC Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo told us on December 2 that the GOC messenger to the FARC (Henry Acosta) has not succeeded in meeting with FARC Secretariat members Alfonso Cano or Pablo Catatumbo. Cano and Catatumbo cite security concerns for their failure to meet. Restrepo believes Cano remains focused on trying to modernize the FARC's internal structures and increase its military capacity.

3. (C) In the immediate term, Restrepo expects the FARC to continue to try to launch some type of high-profile military attack to set the stage for a later effort to influence Colombia's 2010 presidential elections. He speculated that the FARC may also make a "gesture" to Venezuela and other Latin countries, but only if it follows a military success. Restrepo complained that Venezuela's continued support to the FARC and ELN reinforces their intransigence, especially since the terrorist leaders living in Venezuela lose their feel for the realities of the Colombian conflict.

4. (C) In a separate December 1 meeting, Father Dario Echeverri, Secretary of the National Conciliation Commission, agreed that prospects for progress on peace with the FARC remain bleak. Echeverri believes the FARC will never enter into serious talks with Uribe on either a humanitarian accord or a broader peace process, because the group cannot forgive Uribe for the damage he has inflicted on them.

RESTREPO SUBMITS RESIGNATION

15. (C) Echeverri said Restrepo's relations with President Uribe have deteriorated, and that Restrepo has submitted his resignation letter. Echeverri speculated that Uribe will likely reject Restrepo's resignation offer, though, because accepting it would require him to appoint a new commissioner with a mandate to make progress (which Uribe does not want given likely FARC demands) or to leave the post vacant. Echeverri said the latter would send a bad signal to the new U.S. administration and the international community, since it would make it appear the GOC is not interested in peace.

LETTER EXCHANGES GOING NOWHERE

16. (C) Echeverri does not believe that the exchange of letters between the "intellectuals" led by Piedad Cordoba and the FARC will lead anywhere. The "intellectuals" sent an initial letter to the FARC on September 11 calling for dialogue (which the FARC responded to on October 16), as well as a second letter on November 28 asking that the FARC refrain from the "inhuman" practice of kidnapping. Echeverri said that with the letters, the FARC appears to be following the steps of the ELN. Whereas in the past the FARC insisted on a dialogue with the GOC and ignored civil society, the group now appears to have reversed itself and prefers to talk with civil society and exclude the GOC. Echeverri said this approach has led nowhere for the ELN and is unlikely to lead anywhere for the FARC either.

17. (C) Restrepo observed that the FARC's "cards" in Colombia's internal politics are ex-Senator (and former hostage) Luis Eladio Perez and Senator Piedad Cordoba. He said Cordoba wants the FARC's support for her 2010 presidential campaign, and believes the FARC will release some hostages to her to enhance her stature. Restrepo doubts the FARC would do this, especially in the absence of any military success, but speculated that the FARC is trying to burnish Cordoba's public image through the letter exchange.

BETANCOURT RETURNS

18. (C) Restrepo said that Ingrid Betancourt's recent seven-country tour of Latin America, coordinated jointly by the GOC and the Government of France, was designed to build her international image as she tries to set up her own international foundation. He stressed that it was important that her first meeting was with President Uribe in Bogota, and noted that the FARC is not happy with Betancourt's public criticism.

NICHOLS